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SUBJECT: GERMANY ON CUBA/EU AFTER MORATINOS VISIT

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly; Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) German Charge Michael Klepsch told Pol-Econ Counselor April 11 that EU embassies in Havana this week would be sending in their on-the-ground observations to the EU's COLAT, at which Spain was expected to report on Foreign Minister Moratinos' visit and try to sell a new approach to Cuba. Klepsch, representing the EU presidency, predicted that Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, The Netherlands and Sweden would object to EU-wide political-level contact with Cuba, but that Spain would push hard with the others, who tend to see dialog for its own sake as better than no dialog. Klepsch said that Spain would have until May's COLAT to demonstrate that engagement with the GOC yielded results. Otherwise the EU would find it hard to change its common position, which links political-level engagement to improvement in human rights.

¶2. (C) Klepsch's assessment of Cuba's human rights performance was not too dissimilar from our own: Certain overt and visible measures of repression are slightly relaxed (fewer overall political prisoners and fewer acts of repudiation), but the essential police-state apparatus is intact and fundamentally unchanged. He added that he did not expect the Cuban government to release political prisoners immediately, but might do so in the next month as a way to give Spain something to work with in the EU. Klepsch predicted that such releases would be of prisoners whose sentences were completed in any case, so not a great humanitarian gesture.

¶3. (C) Pol-Econ Counselor pressed Klepsch on EU-wide endorsement of a Fidel-to-Raul Castro succession, which the USG viewed as potentially the most harmful possible outcome of Moratinos's visit. Klepsch said European governments did not see it the same way, preferring instead to deal with the reality of Raul Castro succeeding his brother in power. Pol-Econ Counselor acknowledged the reality of Raul inheriting that power, but said countries had a choice: "They could suck up to Raul Castro or hold back full recognition until there is a process that involves consultation with the Cuban people over their future." Klepsch's reply referred to the conditions imposed by Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque on the new relationship with Spain: "Mutual respect," and a political dialog that does not raise internal Cuban issues that Cuba does not want on the table. As an example of Cuban tenacity on these matters, Klepsch said the GOC was demarching the German government to send no official representatives to an April 24 conference in Berlin on Cuban human rights/democracy, hosted by the Adenaur Foundation and two Czech-based NGOs.

¶4. (C) Comment: We are frustrated that this un-enforced common position is all we have to work with, but believe that objective facts about Cuba should make the case for resisting an enhanced EU/Cuba relationship. The GOS and GOC, now allies in this endeavor, can be expected to make a glass-half-full argument: That repression is on the wane and that Cuba under Raul Castro will be amenable to reform if only Europeans would treat the regime with respect. The April 24 conference in Berlin will be an excellent opportunity, in the heart of Europe, to report exactly the opposite: The Cuban police state is as cruel and undemocratic as ever, Raul Castro is no reformer, and no self-respecting European government should be fooled by cosmetic human rights gestures.
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